

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1: (Currently Amended) A method for facilitating a play of a slot game after placement of a wager, the method comprising:

- (a) presenting, in the play of the slot game, a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel segments;
- (b) presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments;
- (c) providing an award, if any, based on the symbols presented in each of the active reel segments;
- (d) deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol;
- (e) determining which active reel segments, if any, have been deactivated; and
- (f) repeating (b) to (e) in the same play of the slot game without placement of another wager until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

Claim 2: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel segments comprises presenting the active reel segments in a bonus mode of play in response to presentation of a symbol combination during a standard mode of play that invokes the bonus mode of play.

Claim 3: (Original) The method as in Claim 2, wherein a bonus symbol set comprising the symbols presented in each of the active reel segments during the bonus mode of play is different than a standard symbol set comprising standard symbols presented in the mechanical reel configuration during the standard mode of play.

Claim 4: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, further comprising at least partially randomly selecting which symbol is to be presented in each of the active reel segments.

Claim 5: (Original) The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which symbol is to be presented comprises associating a reel strip having a predetermined symbol set to each of the active reel segments.

Claim 6: (Original) The method as in Claim 5, wherein associating a reel strip having a predetermined symbol set to each of the active reel segments comprises associating a different reel strip to each of the active reel segments.

Claim 7: (Original) The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which symbol is to be presented comprises associating a predetermined symbol set to each of the active reel segments.

Claim 8: (Original) The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which symbol is to be presented comprises associating a predetermined symbol set to a plurality of the active reel segments.

Claim 9: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein the active reel segments that are deactivated by being associated with a discontinue symbol are de-emphasized to be distinguished from the active reel segments.

Claim 10: (Original) The method as in Claim 9, further comprising retaining the discontinue symbol in each of the active reel segments that are deactivated, thereby distinguishing the deactivated reel segments from the active reel segments.

Claim 11: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments comprises presenting continue symbols in one or more of the active reel segments, wherein the continue symbols direct its respective one of the active reel segments to remain active.

Claim 12: (Original) The method as in Claim 11, further comprising associating a credit award with one or more of the continue symbols.

Claim 13: (Original) The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises associating a positive credit award having an additive effect on an accumulated credit total.

Claim 14: (Original) The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises associating a null credit award having no positive or negative effect on an accumulated credit total.

Claim 15: (Original) The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises associating a negative credit award having a subtractive effect on an accumulated credit total.

Claim 16: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, further comprising associating a credit award with one or more of the discontinue symbols.

Claim 17: (Previously Presented) The method as in Claim 16, wherein associating a credit award comprises associating a positive credit award having an additive effect on an accumulated credit total.

Claim 18: (Original) The method as in Claim 16, wherein associating a credit award comprises associating a null credit award having no positive or negative effect on an accumulated credit total.

Claim 19: (Original) The method as in Claim 16, wherein associating a credit award comprises associating a negative credit award having a subtractive effect on an accumulated credit total.

Claim 20: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, further comprising deactivating a predetermined plurality of the active display segments in response to deactivation of one of the active reel segments that is associated with a discontinue symbol.

Claim 21: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols comprises automatically repeating presenting symbols and deactivating the active reel segments until all of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

Claim 22: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols comprises providing a user interface to allow a participant to initiate each repeated presentation of symbols until all of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

Claim 23: (Original) The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols and deactivating the active reel segments until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated comprises deactivating the active reel segments until all of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

Claim 24: (Currently Amended) A casino gaming apparatus hosting a game having at least a standard mode of operation operable after placement of a wager and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:

a video screen to present, in a play of the game, a display grid having a plurality of display cells;

a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode of operation; and

a processor programmed to (i) identify a predetermined symbol combination occurring on the display grid during the standard mode of operation to activate the bonus mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation, in the same play of the game, the processor programmed to:

(ii) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more active reels having corresponding reel strips,

(iii) provide an award, if any, based on the symbols randomly presented via any of the active reels,

(iv) deactivate any of the active reels presenting a discontinue symbol,

(v) determine which active reels, if any, have been deactivated, and

(vi) repeat the random presentation of symbols without placement of another wager, the provision of an award, if any, the deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbol, and the determination of which reels, if any, have been deactivated until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

Claim 25: (Original) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor comprises a random number generator configured to randomly select the symbols for presentation via the reels.

Claim 26: (Original) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the user interface comprises a user interface mechanism to allow the player to initiate each repetition of the random presentation of symbols.

Claim 27: (Currently Amended) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, further comprising—A casino gaming apparatus hosting a game having at least a standard mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:

a video screen to present, in a play of the game, a display grid having a plurality of display cells;

a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode of operation;

a processor programmed to (i) identify a predetermined symbol combination occurring on the display grid during the standard mode of operation to activate the bonus mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation, in the same play of the game, the processor programmed to:

(ii) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more active reels having corresponding reel strips,

(iii) provide an award, if any, based on the symbols randomly presented via any of the active reels,

(iv) deactivate any of the active reels presenting a discontinue symbol,

(v) determine which active reels, if any, have been deactivated,

(vi) repeat the random presentation of symbols, the provision of an award, if any, the deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbol, and the determination of which reels, if any, have been deactivated until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated, and

(vii) cause a bonus payout bar to present award payout-subtotals for each of the reels associated with the bonus mode of operation.

Claim 28: (Previously Presented) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor is further programmed to automatically repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until all of the active display cells have been deactivated without player intervention.

Claim 29: (Original) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming apparatus comprises a slot machine, and the standard mode of operation of the slot machine is a slot game.

Claim 30: (Original) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming apparatus comprises a video poker machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video poker machine is a poker game.

Claim 31: (Original) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming apparatus comprises a video bingo machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video bingo machine is a bingo game.

Claim 32: (Original) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming apparatus comprises a video keno machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video keno machine is a keno game.

Claim 33: (Previously Presented) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor is programmed to repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until all of the reels have been deactivated.

Claim 34: (Currently Amended) A casino gaming apparatus hosting a game having at least a standard mode of operation operable after placement of a wager and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:

 a first reel configuration to display, in a play of the game, a plurality of display cells;

 a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode of operation; and

 a processor programmed to (i) identify a predetermined symbol combination occurring on the first reel configuration during the standard mode of operation to activate the bonus mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation, in the same play of the game, the processor programmed to:

 (ii) randomly present symbols via a second reel configuration which includes one or more active reels having corresponding reel strips,

 (iii) provide an award, if any, based on the symbols randomly presented via any of the active reels,

 (iv) deactivate any of the active reels presenting a discontinue symbol,

 (v) determine which active reels, if any, have been deactivated, and

 (vi) repeat the random presentation of symbols without placement of another wager, the provision of an award, if any, the deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbol, and the determination of which active reels, if any, have been deactivated until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

Claim 35: (Currently Amended) A method for facilitating a play of a slot game after placement of a wager, the method comprising:

- (a) presenting, in the play of the slot game, a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;
- (b) presenting symbols in each of the active display segments;
- (c) providing an award, if any, based on the symbols presented in each of the active display segments;
- (d) deactivating the active display segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol;
- (e) determining which active display segments, if any, have been deactivated; and
- (f) repeating (b) to (e) in the same play of the slot game without placement of another wager until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated.

Claim 36: (Previously Presented) The method as in Claim 1, wherein the deactivated reel segments are prevented from presenting another symbol in the same play of the game.

Claim 37: (Previously Presented) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the deactivated reels are prevented from presenting another symbol in the same play of the game.

Claim 38: (Previously Presented) The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 34, wherein the deactivated reels are prevented from presenting another symbol in the same play of the game.

Claim 39: (Previously Presented) The method as in Claim 35, wherein the deactivated display segments are prevented from presenting another symbol in the same play of the game.